

MARVEL

511

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THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC MAGAZINE!

Fantastic Four®



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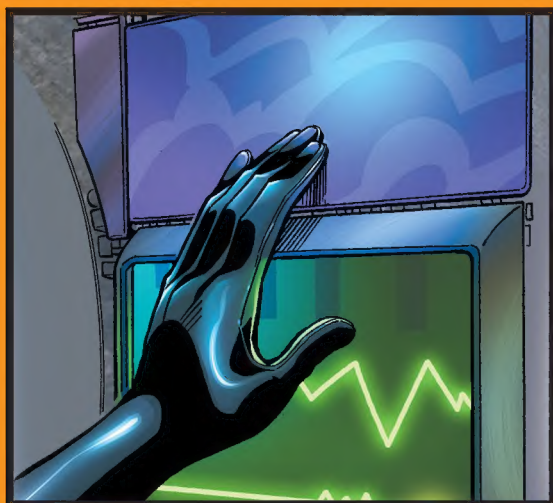
THE FANTASTIC FOUR

1 A team—and a family—of adventurers, explorers and imagonauts, the Fantastic Four lead lives both ordinary—and extraordinary. As of today:

2 The team has battled Victor Von Doom twice in rapid succession, and they bear the scars—some external, far more of them internal. Doom, having transferred his mind into Ben Grimm's rocky form, craftily manipulated Reed into obliterating his enemy the only way possible—by killing Ben.

3 In the weeks following, the trauma of Ben's death has torn the family apart. They have reunited—tensely, and only barely—because Reed has determined that a spark of life remains in Ben's body. In order to restore Ben, however, they'll need his soul—so, using modifications on Doom's own technology, Reed, Sue and Johnny have forced their way into where they know that soul to be: Heaven.

4 There, struggling heroically past impossible barriers and incredible odds, they have found their friend—and, against Ben's wishes, a mysterious locked door.



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"HEREAFTER"



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**Part
 3 of 3**



It's a *hodgepodge* of *technology*, but these are my amalgamated designs.

It's like every whatchamacallit in your *lab* rolled into one giant... *thingamajig*.



Yeah. Yeah. I can't make heads or tails out of the *engineering*, but there's no question it's got your fingerprints all *over* it.

I don't get it. Since when are you teaching shop class up *here*?



Reed?



Ben, *talk* to us. What's *happening*?

Yer husband's catchin' *on*, but this ain't gonna be easy fr him ta *hear*.

I wanted ta plow through that door on my *OWN*, Reed. I didn't want ya t' ever hafta find *out*.

Find *what* out?

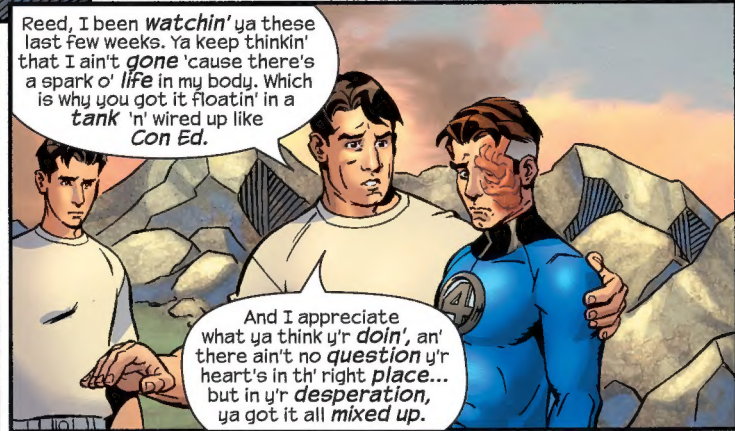


That Reed's responsible for locking my brother *out of heaven*.



No...
...no, that's...not possible.

Reed...
I'm...your lifeline...



Reed, I been *watchin'* ya these last few weeks. Ya keep thinkin' that I ain't *gone* 'cause there's a spark o' *life* in my body. Which is why you got it floatin' in a *tank* 'n' wired up like *Con Ed*.

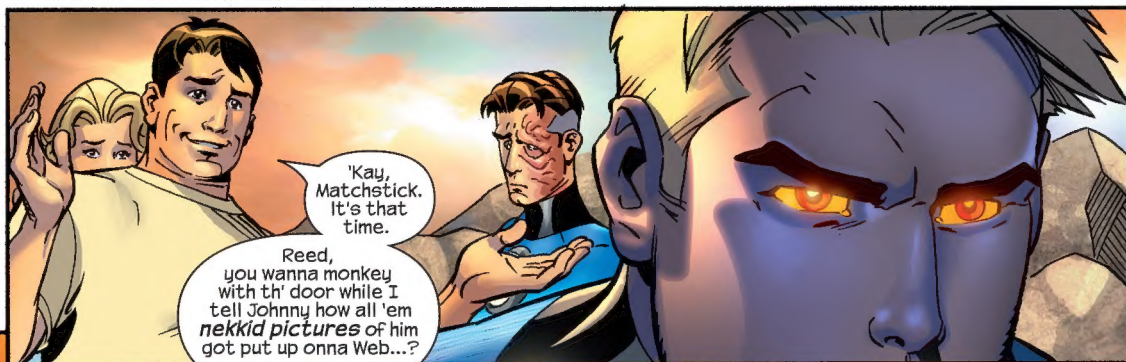
And I appreciate what ya think y'r *doin'*, an' there ain't no *question* y'r heart's in th' right *place*... but in y'r *desperation*, ya got it all *mixed up*.

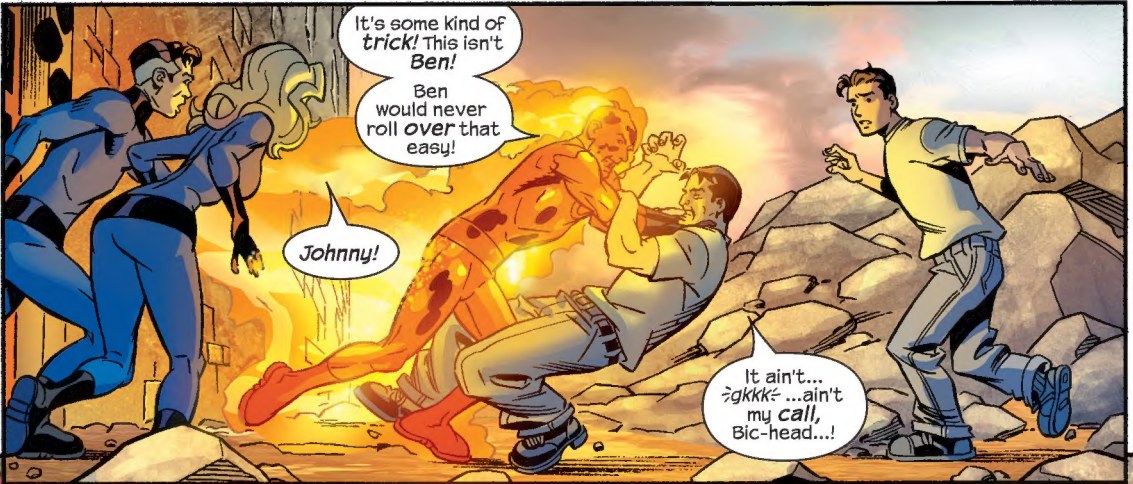


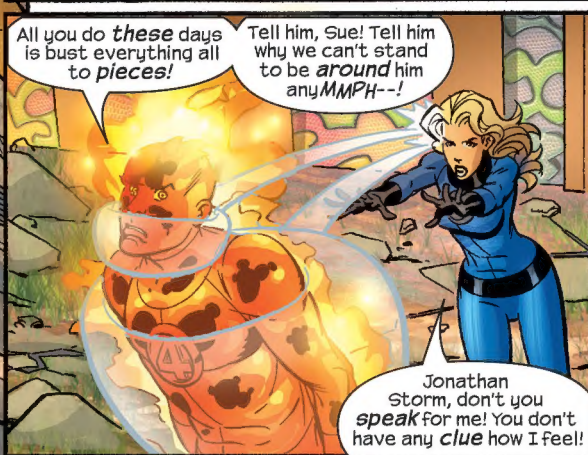
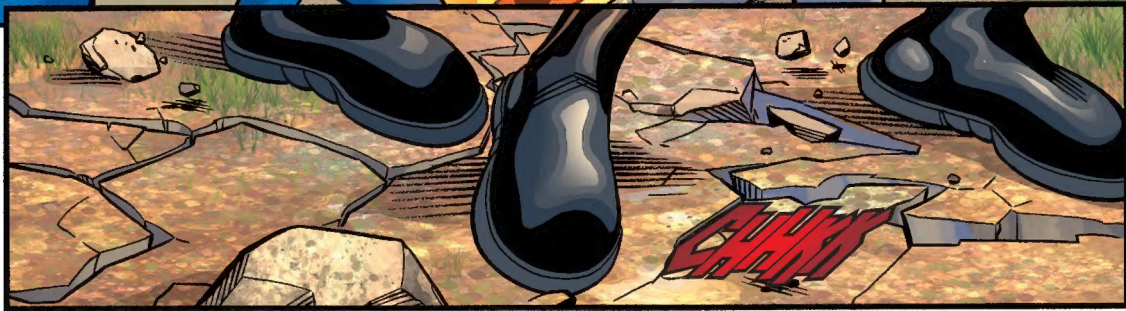
Whatever life is *there* is *only* there 'cause yer gizmos dug it out, amped it up *into* somethin', an' won't let it *go* like they *oughta*. It ain't *salvageable*...but it's holding me *back* all th' *same*. Y'unnerstand?

It ain't that I'm stuck *here*, Reed.

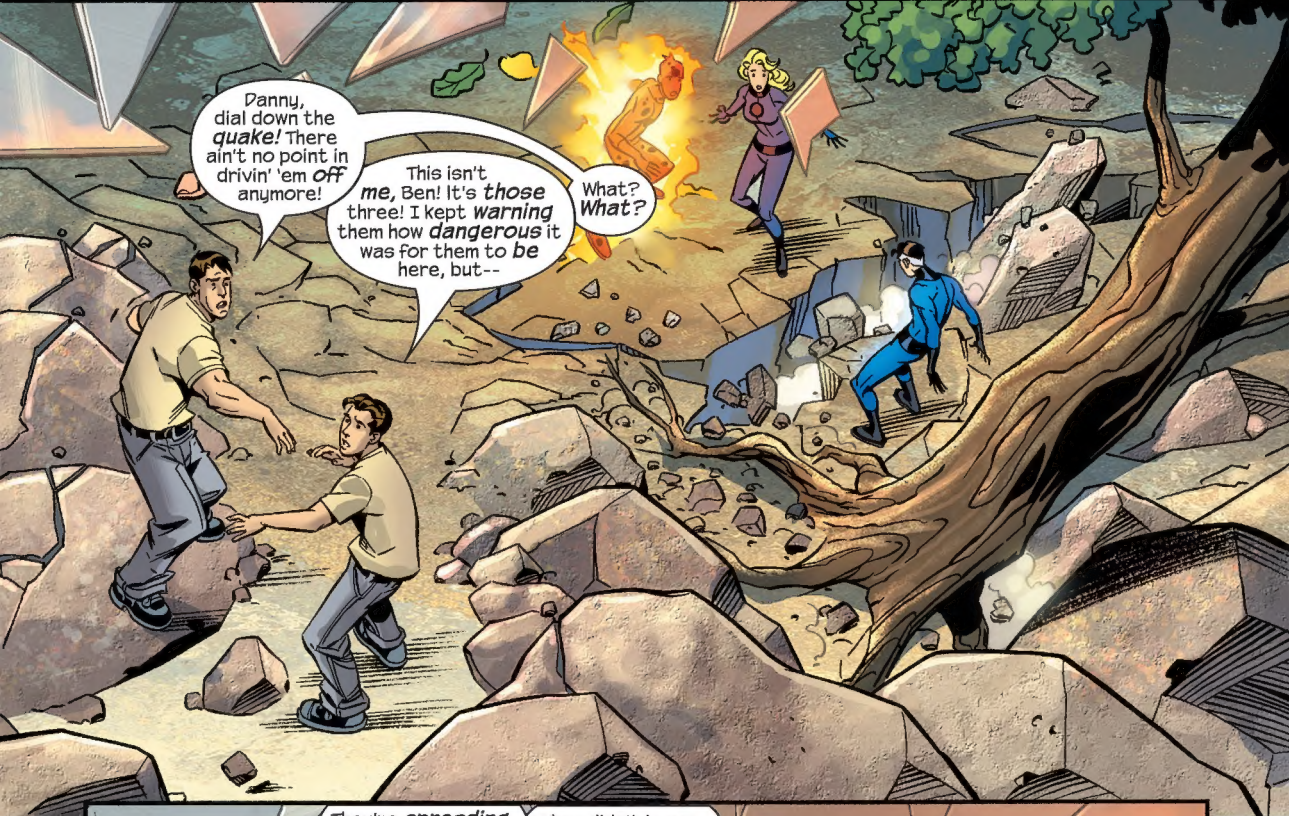
I'm stuck *there*.











Danny,
dial down the
quake! There
ain't no point in
drivin' 'em *off*
anymore!

This isn't
me, Ben! It's *those*
three! I kept *warning*
them how *dangerous* it
was for them to be
here, but--

What?
What?



They're *spreading*
their emotions like
an *infection*.

They didn't leave
their *rage* behind,
Ben!



I killed
him... it's my
fault...

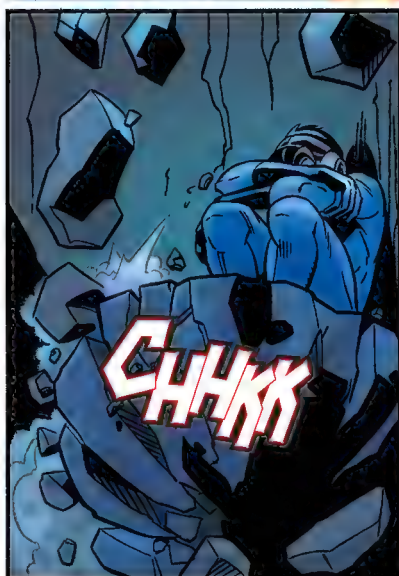
THEY
DIDN'T LEAVE
THEIR PAIN!



The
door! We gotta
get everybody
through th' *door!*
But *how?*









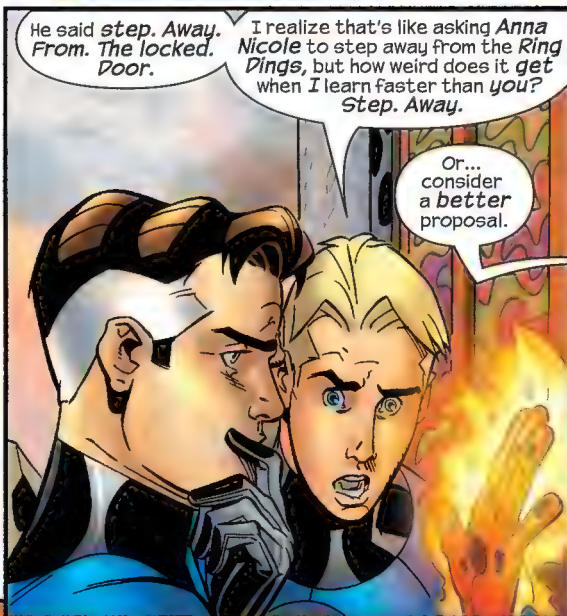


Uh-oh.
Not so
fast.



Aw, fr
Pete's sake.
Stretcho, get
away from
there!

Hmmm?



He said *step. Away.*
From. The locked.
Door.

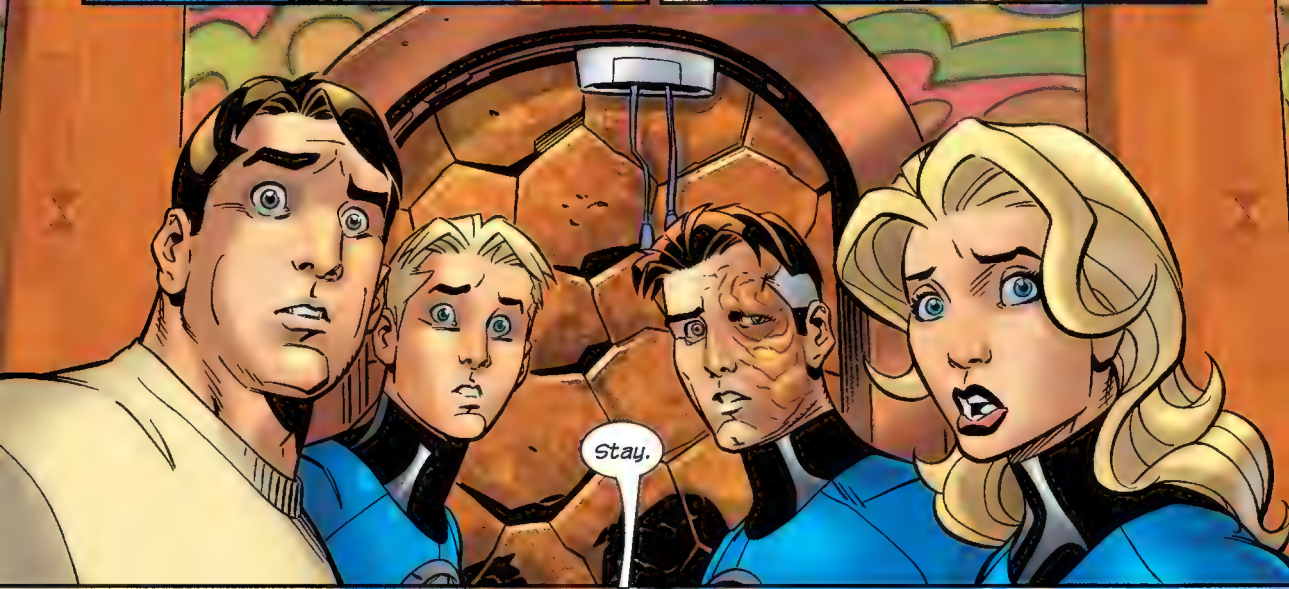
I realize that's like asking *Anna Nicole* to step away from the *Ring Dings*, but how weird does it get when I learn faster than you? *Step. Away.*

Or...
consider
a *better*
proposal.



You can't blame Reed for being *curious*. After all, this is the doorstep to *God's Realm*.

And in light of all you've *been* through--not only today, but in the service of mankind through the years--I've been empowered by the Man in Charge to offer the four of you this *invitation*:



Stay.



I'm not joking. We can bring your children, too, if you'd like, or you can simply wait for them. Either way, you'll forever be at one with the Maker, in a place of eternal bliss.



In the province of *ultimate knowledge*.

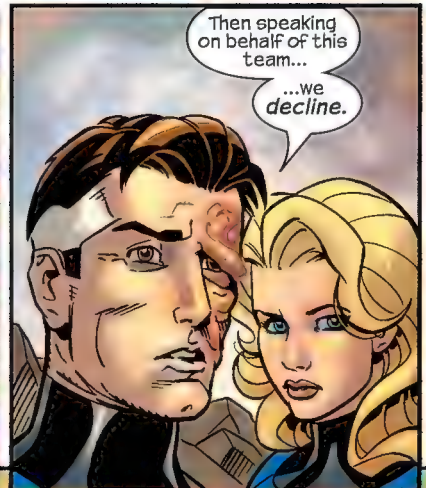
Yes.



The solutions to every mystery of the universe will be at our fingertips? Every answer *conceivable* ours simply for the asking?



Absolutely.



Then speaking on behalf of this team...

...we decline.



You may tell your boss that we're tremendously *honored* by his gracious gesture-- but we're not yet done exploring.

What gives this family its *purpose* and its *joy* isn't the *destination*...it's the *journey*.



Good answer.

KLAR



Enjoy
your
visit.



A visit?
Not a one-
way *trip*?
I promise.
You passed
his *test*.
Well...
now we're
talking.

Huh?
What kinda
test?



He'll explain. And, Ben...
glad you came by. Old
neighborhood still
the same?
Not without
you there, Danny
boy. Love ya.
Take care.
See you
soon.
Figure of
speech.





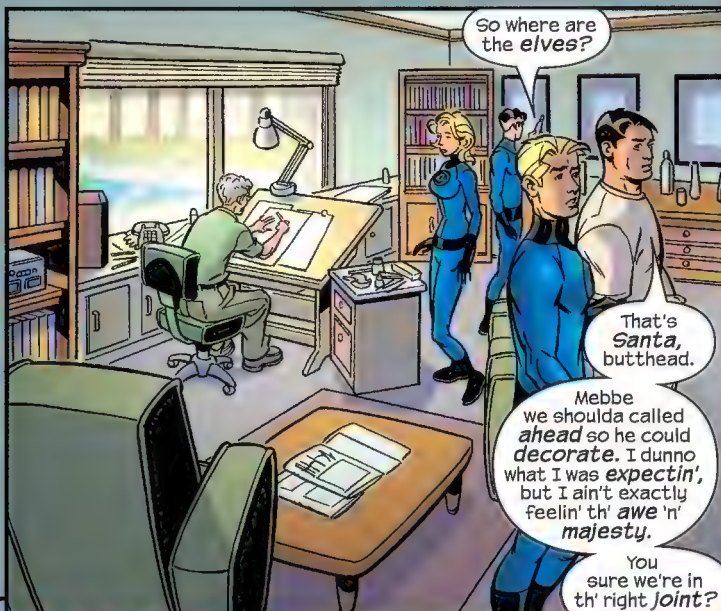
Got a
lump in your
throat there,
big fella?

Yeah.
I'm chokin' on
yer *hospital*
chart.

Understood.

Stay
together,
everyone! Keep
yourselves *limber*!
There's something
up ahead!





So where are the *elves*?

That's *Santa*, butthead.

Mebbe we shoulda called *ahead* so he could *decorate*. I dunno what I was *expectin'*, but I ain't exactly feelin' th' *awe 'n' majesty*.

You sure we're in th' right *joint*?

Hush, you two. Show proper respect for... for...

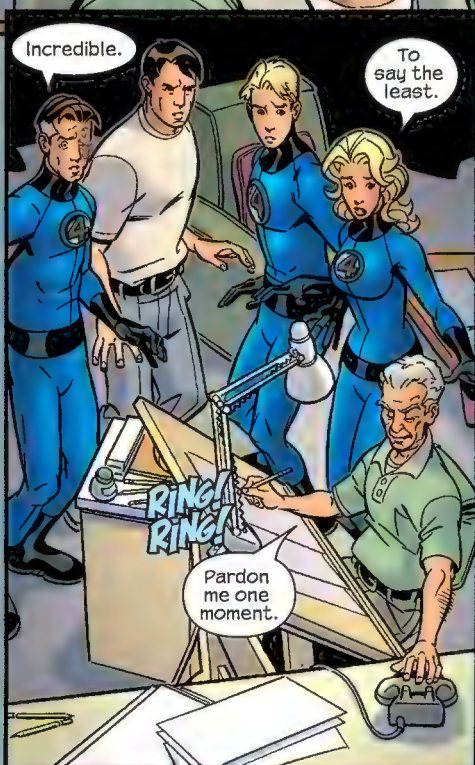
...Reed, why am I taller than the *Almighty*?

What you *see* is what I *am* to you. Don't worry. It's a *compliment*, not an *insult*.



That's what my creations *do*.

They find the *humanity* in *God*.

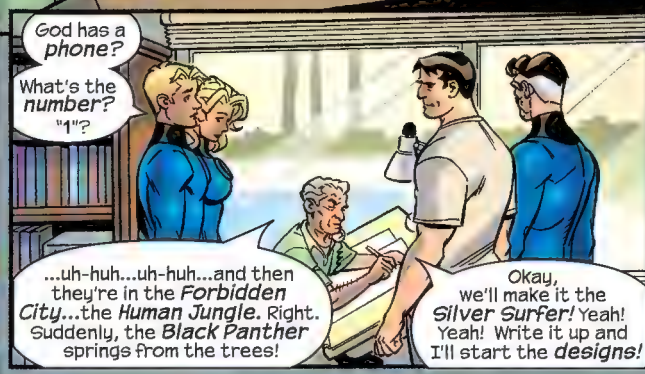


Incredible.

To say the least.

RING!
RING!

Pardon me one moment.



God has a *phone*?
What's the *number*?
"1"?

...uh-huh...uh-huh...and then they're in the *Forbidden City*...the *Human Jungle*. Right. Suddenly, the *Black Panther* springs from the trees!

Okay, we'll make it the *Silver Surfer*! Yeah! Yeah! Write it up and I'll start the *designs*!

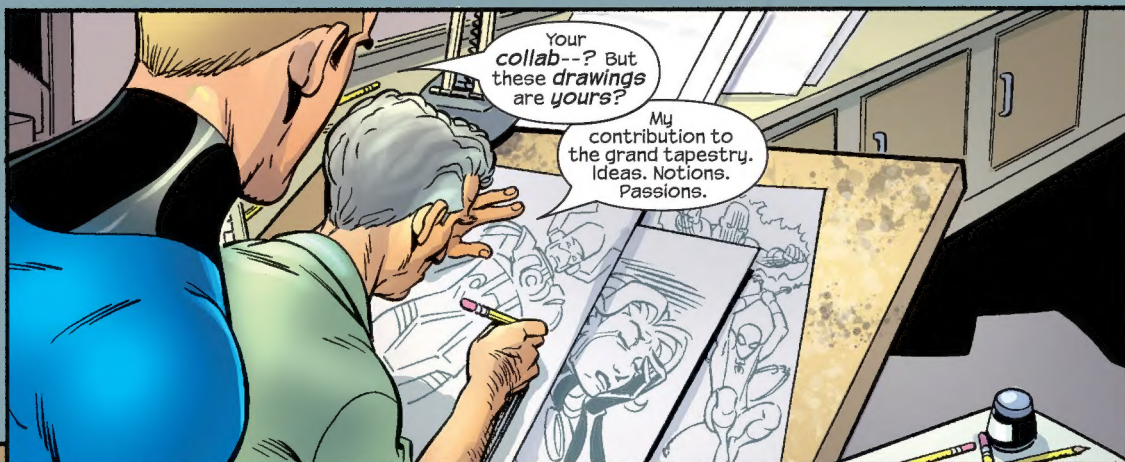


Who...

Who called?

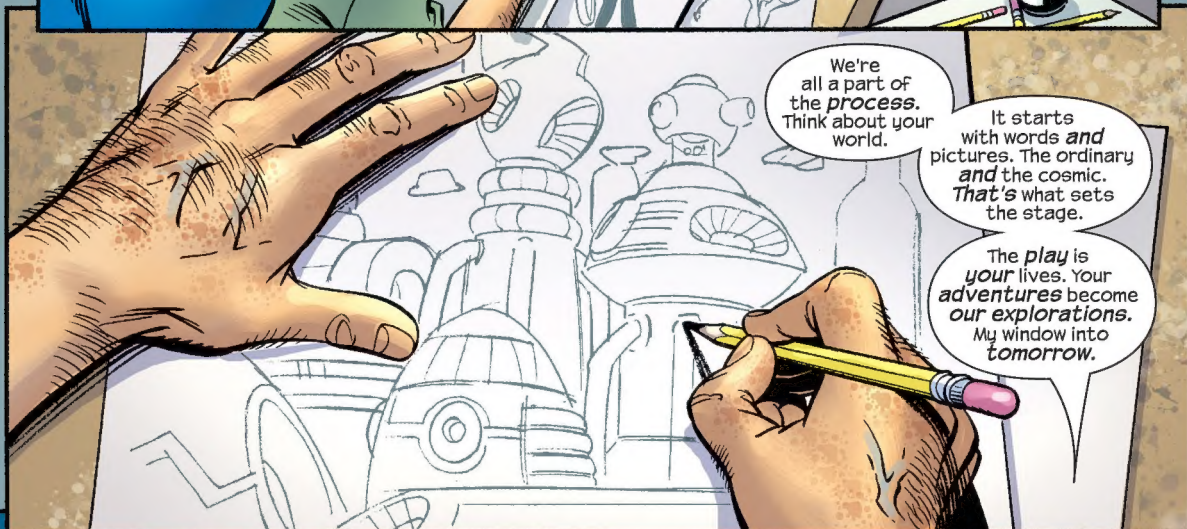
My *collaborator*.

'nuff said.



Your collab--? But these drawings are yours?

My contribution to the grand tapestry. Ideas. Notions. Passions.



We're all a part of the *process*. Think about your world.

It starts with words *and* pictures. The ordinary *and* the cosmic. *That's* what sets the stage.

The *play* is your lives. Your adventures become *our* explorations. My window into tomorrow.



How far out is the world that's coming?

What is it? Where is it going? How will it evolve?

The mystery intrigues me.

